

Analysis of Three Day Road of Three Day Road and Whale Rider

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The *Twelve Stage Hero's Journey*, a structure commonly found in literature, is derived from Joseph Campbell's Monomyth from his book *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*. Hero's journey is the classic pattern or course of adventure that is followed and adapted by most stories. The three main sections of the structure, other known as the nuclear unit, are separation, initiation, and return. These three sections are divided further and focused into three to four stages. These stages include Birth, Call to Adventure, Mentor/Amulet, Crossing the Threshold, Tests, Helpers, Climax/The Final Battle, Flight, Return, Elixir, and Home.

Three Day Road, a novel by Canadian writer Joseph Boyden, is an example of a work that utilizes The Hero's Journey. From war to life lessons, Niska's and Xavier's experiences develop them as characters and as people. This proves that The Hero's Journey, as a template of storytelling, does not only apply to fictional superheroes or magical characters, but can easily be applied to people's lives. Niska, being the second narrator of *Three Day Road*, is very insightful with her recollection of events that affected her from childhood. Readers get to experience many of these moments with Niska. In Niska's story in the novel, *Three Day Road*, Mentor/Amulet, Tests, Climax/The Final Battle, and Flight are the most prominent stages of the Hero's Journey that can be noticed.

Xavier's aunt, Niska, is a Cree-Ojibwe medicine woman. Niska's father, the *hookimaw*, or leader of her bush community, acts as a protective figure to Niska during her early ages. The Mentor/Amulet in the hero's journey is someone who aids the Hero by giving insight, wisdom, training, or confidence to the Hero. The Mentor is experienced, and uses their knowledge to help the Hero overcome their initial fears, and prepares the Hero for their journey. Niska's mentor, her father, known as the last great talker in their clan, educates Niska through his stories. During one winter when the people of Niska's clan are starving, a group of hunters set out to hunt, awaken a hibernating bear, and kill it, an act that is against their beliefs and should be avoided. Niska observes how her father skins and cooks the bear in a respectful manner, and feels shocked when her father begins to cry for the bear. Through this experience, Niska learns the importance of respecting all living creatures, being un wasteful, and the actions that need to take place during desperate times. During the same winter, a young hunter named Micah and his family leave the clan and head west in hopes of finding game. After struggling to provide his family with food, Micah freezes to death while ice fishing. Micah's wife and her baby are desperate, and feed themselves with Micah's body. The two return to Niska's clan looking healthy and thriving, and Niska's father is immediately aware of the situation. After a group of young men find Micah's remains in the wife's pack, Niska's father knows that Micah's wife and baby have gone *windigo*. He takes on his responsibility as a *windigo* killer, and suffocates the two to death. Niska's father tells Niska that she will have to carry out the same deed later on as she is part of the line of *windigo* killers. Through her father's actions and teachings, Niska becomes informed of her unique identity and role in her community, and learns that sacrifices must be made during crucial times.

Throughout Niska's journey in *Three Day Road*, the "tests" that she must overcome develops her as a person. Within the Hero's Journey, the Hero is bound to run into many obstacles that threaten their identity and allow their true personality to shine. As the daughter of her tribe's leader and a member of the *windigo* killer bloodline, she is exposed to her father's responsibility as a *windigo* killer from a young age. The arresting and killing of Niska's father brings hardships to Niska and her tribe, and leaves them directionless, forcing members of the tribe to leave the bushes to towns in Moose Factory. Some Niska reveals the convulsions and visions she experiences, and this reveals her fear of her gift and her fear of not being able to take her father's place as a leader, this becomes a major obstacle she must overcome and displays her strength and motivation as a person. This fear that builds up inside of Niska allows her to develop and transition from a child to an adult as she is able to eventually come to terms with her responsibilities and what her bloodline obligates her to do.

Niska also faces her inability to fit in with many people, especially the wemistikoshiw people as well as her own people who have turned away from their heritage. This is an obstacle she gradually conquers overtime. An example may be in the residential school, where she does not obey the nuns but instead rebels against the school's obligations, such as cutting her hair, and does not allow them to strip her of her heritage and culture as easily as the other children. She is rescued by her mother soon after, being able to live in the bush once again. Niska also experiences being unable to fit in whenever she arrives in a wemistikoshiw town, as she is seen as an outcast and receives many strange looks from both wemistikoshiw people and her own people. She is not familiar with the wemistikoshiw teachings and is not able to speak their tongue as well as understand their logic very well since she had not stayed within the residential school for long. These experiences develop Niska's character and resilience, as it brings her true colours into view and showcases her actions in a serious situation, and develops her ability to bear pain both emotionally and physically.

After a series of tests, Niska is directed to face the biggest, most critical challenge of her journey. The Climax, other known as the Ordeal, is the moment when the Hero must oppose and survive their greatest fear. The Hero experiences "death", which they must survive to be transformed and reborn. "Death" in the hero's journey can have many different interpretations, and may mean the break-up of a relationship. The Climax is often a moment when a lover exposes their dark side, and turns their back on the Hero. Before confronting the climax, Niska first encounters an old woman from the Indian part of Moose Factory. The old woman, who acts as a helper in Niska's journey, assists her by offering European clothes to wear, as well as giving information about the French hunter. With a sharpened awareness of the French hunter's true character, Niska sets out to find him. She finds the French hunter eating his dinner at a pub, and joins him inside. During her meeting with the hunter, Niska is conflicted with varied feelings of resentment and attraction. She struggles to accept that the French hunter is not the person she wishes him to be, and that she will never acquire happiness as a *windigo* killer. Overwhelmed with sadness, Niska leaves the pub, heads to the residential school, and calls for her sister, Rabbit. The French hunter, who had followed her, leads her to the town's church, and deceives Niska into having intercourse with him. He claims that by tricking her, he has expelled her spirit, and torments Niska. The sudden betrayal from the hunter and fear of losing her identity engulfs her, putting Niska into a state of mental pain.

The Climax is followed by the Flight. After experiencing the most difficult challenge, the Hero must return to the everyday world. In certain cases, the departure from adventure may be pleasant and safe. In other cases, the Flight may be presented in an abrupt and unpleasant way. After believing that the French hunter had stolen her strength, Niska rushes out of the church feeling nauseated. She throws away her European clothing into the river, sprints impulsively to her canoe, and paddles home. The morning after arriving, she constructs a lodge, continuously pouring water onto heated rocks, and praying for purification. She then builds a shaking tent and notices how the animal spirits come to her in a short amount of time. Niska requests for the lynx spirit to eliminate the source of her hurt and suffering, and later discovers that the French hunter committed suicide. After removing herself from the cause of her past distress, Niska is able to recuperate and revert back to her normal lifestyle.

Whale Rider, a 2002 film written and directed by Niki Caro, is a story about a Maori girl named Paikea whose ambition is to become chief of her tribe. Paikea breaks the Maori tradition of having a man leader, and is put to the test to prove herself to her grandfather. She struggles to find acceptance in her grandfather's eyes, and goes on a personal adventure to figure out how to make herself worthy. The film begins with Paikea's birth, and her grandfather's disappointment after finding out Paikea's twin brother died, making Paikea the firstborn child of the family. The Maori believe that chiefs can only be first born males, and her grandfather Koro believes in this rule religiously. This develops into a reflexive hate for Paikea, and a strong distaste in the idea of her learning the "old ways" to become the destined "whale rider". With personal adventures comes character development, which is shown throughout this film in the typical "Hero's Journey" structure. In the film, *Whale Rider*, Call to Adventure, Tests, and Elixir are the most prominent stages that can be viewed.

The Call to Adventure is when the Hero is brought out of their comfort zone, or is forced to face a problem or challenge they can not ignore. This moment is presented through an event or messenger, and may be accepted voluntarily or unwillingly. In the case of *Whale Rider*, the Call to Adventure is when Paikea attempts to train to become a leader. This moment causes her grandfather to stop her from practicing with a stick, which starts a spiral of events that builds Paikea's resolve and allows her to become the destined "whale rider". Though the call to adventure in this film is shown as a relatively short scene, the impact it has on Paikea serves as the fuel for the rest of her story. Her grandfather's refusal to her learning motivates her to train in secret with her uncle. This experience teaches Paikea the importance of taking initiative when necessary. After accepting her call to adventure and beginning to learn the "old ways," Paikea is put through various 'tests', following the template of the classic Hero's Journey.

After Paikea's call to adventure, she steps out of her comfort zone to set out on her journey to become the chief of her people. The Hero's journey is never smooth, but a rocky path that they must walk in order to reach their goal. Throughout the path, the Hero is met with a series of obstacles and challenges, testing the Hero in various ways. Whether these obstacles may be a physical hurdle, or a violent encounter with their enemy, the Hero must overcome each bump, reaching towards the ultimate goal. The first test Paikea must overcome is the discrimination and disrespect that her grandfather, whom she loves dearly, puts upon her for wanting to be a female leader. As a relative, Paikea's grandfather should be there to support Paikea, yet he doubts and questions her achievements. When Koro catches Paikea secretly learning the way of the stick, which is traditionally reserved for men training to become a

leader of the Maori, Koro scolds Paikea, telling her that she is disrespecting their traditions and culture. He pushes his own granddaughter from him, telling her that he does not need her in his life. He even tries to send Paikea away couple times, only making Paikea more resilient and determined to prove him wrong. Later in the movie, he does not show up to Paikea's school's talent show as he thinks it is Paikea's fault none of the boys successfully finished their training. This devastates Paikea as she had prepared a poem dedicated to him. There are many moments where Paikea feels hopeless and discouraged as not many people are there to support her, yet she remains strong as she believes her people need her. After Paikea is put through various 'tests', she gains knowledge, also known as elixir, which is the final stages of Hero's cycle.

At the end of the Hero's Journey, the Hero often returns after obtaining the Elixir, an object, knowledge, or a blessing to use in the everyday world. After all the hardships the Hero faces, they grow as a person, learn many lessons, and look forward to a new beginning. After the struggle of constantly trying to prove herself, Paikea becomes the leader of her people. She receives the appreciation she deserves and has worked hard for, regardless of the constant disapproval and punishment. She overcomes the gender stereotypes set by her traditional grandfather, Koro, and proves to him that she can learn the ways of her ancestors and lead her people. Throughout her journey, she learns and develops in many different ways. After becoming the leader of her people, she is able to alter her grandfathers original, discriminatory mindset. Women are often associated with specific stereotypes. They are told that they 'belong in the kitchen' or 'at home with the kids' but Paikea shows everyone that women are equally capable as men and that not only guys, but girls too have the ability to lead. She unites her family, her tribe, and is able to bring back tradition, peace, and harmony amongst her people. Most importantly, she is able to learn more about herself and her identity. She learns to not allow society and other people's opinion determine who she is as an individual, but to trust herself and strive to reach her goal through courage, forgiveness, and love.

The Hero's Journey format of character development in a story is clearly put in place for both *Whale Rider* and *Three Day Road*, as both stories follow the pace of the Hero's Journey, as well as containing many of the commonly used tropes for this storytelling format. From side characters to series of events, the format is used in order to tell the story of each important character, whether done through words or on screen.